

30. (Currently Amended) A method of reducing contamination of a substrate after formation of a metallization layer stack on said substrate, said metallization layer comprising copper, the method comprising:

selectively removing unwanted material from an edge region of said substrate by using a first etchant comprising a diluted compound of nitric acid and hydrofluoric acid as the main component, wherein said selective removal of unwanted material with said first etchant is performed in a protected environment to substantially avoid liberation of gaseous nitric oxide, wherein at least material of a barrier layer of said metallization layer stack and copper of said metallization layer is removed.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim ³⁰~~31~~, wherein dielectric material is removed so as to expose said substrate at said edge region.

33. (Cancel)

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30, further comprising removing unwanted metal with a second etchant other than said first etchant from said edge region prior to selectively removing unwanted material with said first etchant.